

The major causes of flooding in the Houston basin are due to Houston's highly developed area; the intensity and duration of Texas rainfall; and flat topography with little storage. These conditions led to Houston suffering heavily at the hands of flooding—most recently, the \$5 billion price tag after the inundations accompanying Tropical Storm Allison. The flooding heavily damaged the urban infrastructure and, because of the release of human waste from sewers and medical waste from hospitals, posed a severe public health risk.

Improving the security of our nation's drinking water and wastewater infrastructures has become a top priority since the events of 9/11. This legislation takes significant actions in assessing and reducing vulnerabilities relating to the toxic contamination of our water system. The quality of water should be of the utmost importance when it comes to the health and well-being of the people in this country but the effects of storm water compromises this quality. Individuals who swim in front of flowing storm drains are susceptible to earaches, sinus problems, diarrhea, fever, and rashes; these individuals are 50 percent more likely to develop a variety of symptoms than those who swim 400 yards away from the same drains.

In a ranking of environmental risks posed to the metropolitan Houston area, an Environmental Foresight Committee has identified water pollution as having a relatively high risk. Houston needs to address the trash and odor problems in our waterways which significantly affect quality of life, and economic tourism, development.

Maintaining the biological soundness of the state's rivers, lakes, bays, and estuaries is of great importance to the public's economic health and general well-being. The fact that greater pressures and demands are being placed on the federal government pertaining to security of our water resources makes H.R. 2643 paramount to reexamine the process for ensuring that these important priorities effectively address the maintenance of a proper ecological environment of the bays and estuaries of the nation and the health of related living marine resources.

It is time that we as Americans start becoming more aware and better activists in keeping the air we breathe clean. Air pollution can damage trees, crops, other plants, lakes, and animals. Breathing polluted air can make your eyes and nose burn. It can irritate your throat and make breathing difficult. Each day, air pollution causes thousands of illnesses leading to lost days at work and school. Air pollution also reduces agricultural crop and commercial forest yields by billions of dollars each year.

There are 900,000 children in Harris County alone who are at risk of the health effects from the pollutants in the air. Children are more vulnerable to air pollution than adults because they spend more time outdoors than adults, are usually outdoors most in the summer when air pollution levels are highest, and have immature immune systems.

It is time to put a stop to global pollution, it is time to build a better and healthier earth and we can do so by supporting H.R. 2643.

For these reasons I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

IN TRIBUTE TO BILLY E. SHIELDS  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

**HON. HARRY E. MITCHELL**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 28, 2007*

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, this past week the nation commemorated the bravery and heroism of firefighters who risk their lives every day to protect the lives and safety of others. I would like to turn my colleagues' attention to the accomplishments of Phoenix firefighter Captain Billy Shields, who is leaving the ranks of his brother and sister firefighters this Friday, June 30, to start a new phase of his life.

When Captain Shields retires from the Phoenix Fire Department and the United Phoenix Firefighters Association Local 493, where he served as president, he will do so with a long record of accomplishments. He has been a stalwart advocate for his fellow firefighters, and as president of United Phoenix Firefighters Association, advanced improvements in fire health and safety standards for firefighters, ambulance and emergency response personnel in Arizona.

Since 1997, Captain Shields has led the way in negotiating contracts for the United Phoenix Firefighters Association that protected the job rights of firefighters and the security of their families. He worked with management, city officials and other community stakeholders and reached a consensus to enhance fire and emergency response capabilities. Because of his work, Central Arizona's fire services are state of the art.

It is important to recognize that Captain Shields is unique among union leaders in his commitment to working closely with the business community to improve the local economy. He was appointed to the Greater Phoenix Economic Council where he serves on its Executive Committee. He has labored to advance an economy for a new generation. He was one of the visionaries who helped advance the biotechnology industry in Arizona with the establishment of the Translational Genomics Research Institute, which is known to Arizonans simply as T-Gen. He partnered with others to improve education at all levels—preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. To help accommodate the explosive growth we are facing in Central Arizona, he has played an instrumental role in the development of our transportation infrastructure and the expansion of transportation options.

All Arizonans who have had a chance to work with Captain Shields are indebted to him for his commitment to make our communities a better place to live, work and raise a family. I've seen this commitment first hand. I worked closely with him as Mayor of Tempe and as an Arizona State Senator, and came to rely on him as a friend and counselor. It has been a pleasure to work with him and I look forward to the chance to collaborate with him as he undertakes new challenges.

Captain Shields, I am proud of your service. Arizona is proud of your service, and forever indebted to you for making our communities stronger, safer and more secure. Marianne joins me in wishing you and your family the very best in this new chapter of your life.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED  
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS  
ACT, 2008

SPEECH OF

**HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 26, 2007*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2643) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, Environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, with Mr. WATT (Acting Chairman) in the chair:

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and staff of the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee for their continued support of the Florida Everglades in the FY08 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill.

This legislation includes funding for implementation of the Modified Waters Deliveries Project. This project is critical to Everglades Restoration, and will ensure natural water flows continue through Everglades National Park.

The Florida Everglades is a unique and precious ecosystem that must be preserved for future generations. Everglades Restoration is a long-term investment that will ensure the Everglades is restored and protected.

I am pleased that the Chairman included \$72 million for Everglades Restoration, which is so critical to ensuring continuation of this vital project. The Interior share of funding combined with the appropriations made to the Army Corps of Engineers in the Energy and Water Appropriations bill will help to ensure restoration moves forward. This funding is a step in the right direction, showing the continued support of the Committee for Restoration. As the FY08 Appropriations cycle moves forward, I will work to ensure that Everglades Restoration remains a top priority.

I thank my colleagues from Florida for their continued support of the Florida Everglades and Restoration funding. Additionally, I would like to thank the President for his steadfast support as well as the Governor of Florida. Floridians understand the great benefit the Everglades provide not just to our ecological diversity, but also to our economy, which is so dependent upon tourism and ecotourism.

On behalf of the residents of Southern Florida I am so proud to represent, I thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and their hard-working staff for their support of this funding.

HONORING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF SOUTH ALABAMA

**HON. JO BONNER**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, June 28, 2007*

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the Boys and Girls Clubs of South Alabama on the occasion of their 50th anniversary.